

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A method for tracking and controlling the distribution of controlled articles from a central inventory of a pharmaceutical company, a portion of the central inventory having been conveyed to at least one remote distributing representative of the pharmaceutical company for further distribution to distributees, the tracking and controlling being conducted in real time by means of electronic communication and data collection, comprising:

- a) preauthorizing a specific distribution transaction to be conducted by the distributing representative by sending [receiving in a system server,] a distribution request from the [a remote] distributing representative [of a pharmaceutical company] for distribution of a packet of articles to a distributee, to a system server and receiving the distribution request in the system server, the request comprising a representative identifier, a distributee identifier, and a statement describing the contents of the packet of articles being distributed from the portion of the central inventory conveyed to [a local inventory associated with] the distributing representative;
- b) confirming the authority of the distributing representative to distribute the packet;

- c) confirming the authority of the distributee to receive the packet;
- d) evaluating the distribution request for meeting specific business logic specified by the pharmaceutical company;
- e) upon successful completion of the preceding steps, transmitting an authorization code to the distributing representative indicating to the distributing representative an authorization to conduct the specific distribution transaction, the authorization code serving as recordable proof of authorization to conduct the specific distribution transaction;
- f) maintaining a local inventory corresponding to the portion of central inventory remaining in the distributing representative possession by decrementing [deleting a description of] the packet's contents from the local inventory and decrementing the packet's contents from the central inventory; and
- g) distributing the packet to the distributee.

Claim 2 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 1 in which the controlled articles are prescription drug samples.

Claim 3 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 2 in which the distributees are licensed dispensing practitioners.

Claim 4 (Cancelled)

Claim 5 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 1 in which the request is received from the remote distributing representative over a communication path including a wireless link.

Claim 6 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 1 including the step of transmitting

the request and the authorization code to the pharmaceutical company.

Claim 7 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 1 including transmitting a corrective action message to the distributing representative if the evaluation step results in an initial denial of authorization.

Claim 8 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 1 in which the request is received from the remote distributing representative by means of electronic transmission of information entered on a sample disbursement form.

Claim 9 (Cancelled)

Claim 10 (Previously presented): A method of Claim 1 in which the specific business logic includes meeting requirements for distribution specified by governmental regulations.

Claim 11 (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of the pharmaceutical company delivering a packet of articles to a remote distributing representative, the distributing representative checking the content of the packet of articles after receiving the packet and issuing an acknowledgement of delivery (AOD) for the articles received, all before said steps of sending and receiving a distribution request in a system server.

Claim 12 (New) The method of Claim 11, wherein said step of checking is conducted by the representative scanning a bar code associated with the content of the packet of articles, the bar code identifying the content and quantity, the identification and quantity data being stored in a computer and transmitted to the pharmaceutical company as part of the acknowledgement of delivery (AOD).

Claim 13 (New) The method of Claim 8, wherein the means of electronic transmission is a fax.

Claim 14 (New) The method of Claim 8 wherein the means of electronic transmission includes a telephone system with an interactive voice response facility.

Claim 15 (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein data for making the statement describing the contents of the packet of articles is obtained by the representative by scanning a bar code associated with the contents of the packet of articles.

Claim 16 (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein the distributee identifier includes a digital signature of the distributee along with a time / date stamp associated therewith.

Claim 17 (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein the representative identifier includes the digital signature of the distributing representative.

Claim 18 (New) The method of Claim 17, wherein the digital signature of the distributing representative is accompanied by a time /date stamp.

Claim 19 (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein the authorization code is stored by the distributing representative as proof of authorization to distribute the packet associated therewith.

Claim 20 (New) The method of Claim 1, as applied to a plurality of representatives, the local inventories of each of which are auditable at any time by virtue of the prior execution of steps (a) through (g).